After Go-Live: Making Your S/4HANA Investment Last

Go-live is a milestone, not a finish line, and the discipline built during migration, clean data, governed code, continuous testing, real-time monitoring, has to become permanent practice for the investment to pay off, with AI-readiness following as one more benefit of keeping it up.

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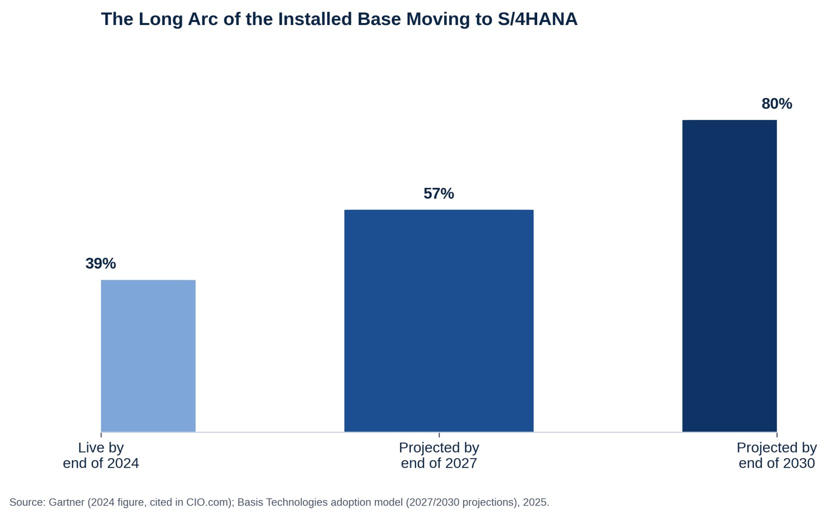
SAP's mainstream maintenance for ECC ends December 31, 2027, and that date is the reason most organizations are moving now. As the installed base shifts toward S/4HANA, the partners, specialists, and third-party tools built around ECC thin out along with it, a pattern this kind of platform transition tends to follow. Hitting the 2027 deadline gets an organization onto a supported platform. It does not, by itself, protect that investment over the years that follow.

The organizations that get lasting value from S/4HANA are the ones that keep the operating discipline from the migration running after go-live: clean data maintained on purpose, custom code kept documented and trimmed, testing that never stops, monitoring that catches problems early. This piece looks at what that discipline looks like in practice once the project team has moved on, and why keeping it up is also what positions an organization to get real value from SAP's next wave of AI capability when it arrives.

The Trajectory Nobody Should Assume Stops at Go-Live

Gartner's data put 39% of SAP's ECC installed base on S/4HANA by the end of 2024. Basis Technologies' modeling projects that share reaching 57% by the end of 2027 (the mainstream maintenance deadline), and roughly 80% by the end of 2030, with full migration of the remaining installed base not expected until the mid-2030s. Call it a fifteen-year-plus transition, industry-wide, running from the day S/4HANA first shipped to the day the last ECC system actually retires.

The organizations ahead of that curve didn't necessarily migrate earliest. Most of them treat the migration as the first phase of a longer platform investment, one where the operating discipline behind governance, testing, and monitoring keeps compounding in value well past the go-live date instead of getting dismantled once the project team disbands. AI-assisted tools make that discipline easier to sustain at scale, but the discipline itself is what actually compounds.



SAP's ECC-to-S/4HANA installed base transition, past and projected.

The Operating Discipline That Has to Outlast the Project Team

Staying current on S/4HANA sounds like a platform question, but in practice it comes down to a few concrete, checkable habits: master data governance that runs continuously instead of as a one-time cleansing exercise; a custom code base that's been assessed, trimmed, and documented rather than carried forward wholesale; a test suite that's automated and runs with every change, not just before major releases; and operational monitoring that catches anomalies before a support ticket does.

None of that is optional overhead left over from the migration. It's what keeps the investment from eroding: data that stays clean protects reporting and integrations, code that stays documented keeps upgrades cheap, tests that run continuously catch regressions before customers do, and monitoring that runs in real time turns a potential outage into a non-event. AI-assisted tooling makes those disciplines easier to sustain at scale, and organizations that keep them up are also better positioned for SAP's next wave of AI capability, from Joule's agent framework to the broader agentic automation Gartner expects to spread through enterprise applications over the next few years. That's a bonus. The discipline pays for itself either way.

10x

projected increase in AI-agent usage among Global 2000 companies by 2027. It's one more reason the operating discipline behind a stable S/4HANA environment is worth keeping up long after go-live. (IDC)

Projected Growth in Enterprise AI-Agent Usage, Global 2000

Source: IDC, cited in analyst roundup (Joget), 2026.

The Caution Worth Repeating

More than 40% of agentic AI projects are projected to be cancelled by the end of 2027 over unclear ROI and weak governance. That statistic doesn't get less relevant once a migration wraps up. If anything, it gets more relevant: a live S/4HANA system with real production data is exactly the environment where agentic AI initiatives start getting proposed. Clean data, governed code, tested changes, monitored operations, and a business case checked against reality instead of defended regardless of it. That combination is the foundation that decides which side of the 40% statistic an organization's next AI initiative lands on.

Where This Leaves You

Orpington Technologies works with SAP customers across the full lifecycle: organizations still deciding when and how to move off ECC ahead of the December 31, 2027 deadline, programs mid-migration who want an independent read on where the real risk sits, and organizations already live on S/4HANA building the operating discipline that protects the investment for years after go-live. AI-assisted delivery is one way Orpington moves faster and catches problems earlier, but it sits alongside deep SAP delivery experience, not in place of it. Whether that means Orpington leading delivery directly or providing independent oversight of a migration someone else is running, the conversation starts the same way. Learn more about Orpington's approach at orpingtontech.com.

Sources & Further Reading

[1] CIO.com — Nearly Half of SAP ECC Customers May Stick With Legacy ERP Beyond 2027

[2] Basis Technologies — The True State of S/4HANA 2025

[3] Analyst roundup (Gartner / IDC / McKinsey) — AI Agent Adoption 2026: What the Data Shows

